

1.4 OBJECTIVES AND THEMES

GENERAL PLAN OBJECTIVES

Several objectives for the General Plan were identified and considered by the Oversight Committee, based on public outreach conducted early in the General Plan process. The objectives provide a foundation for development of the goals and policies in the General Plan, and include:

- Establish a 20-year Urban Growth Boundary;
- Keep the city's small-town feel;
- Provide for slow, managed, and predictable growth;
- Increase housing affordability and diversity;
- Establish better cross-town connections;
- Maintain or increase open space ratios within the City;
- Encourage local jobs and maintain the jobs/housing balance;
- Build and maintain infrastructure in anticipation of growth;
- Integrate land use planning with SSU expansion plans and establish better connections with the University;
- Uphold or improve current levels of city services;
- Encourage socioeconomic diversity;
- Ensure legal adequacy and address external jurisdictional issues, including coordination with the Sonoma County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO), Sonoma County, and Rohnert Park's neighbors;
- Increase pedestrian and bike access;
- Provide a framework for design standards that reflect these objectives; and
- Create options for the city's edges. Allow for soft boundaries and scenic corridors.

THEMES

Building on these overall objectives, the General Plan is structured around several themes, which form the basis of goals and policies throughout the document.

1. *An Urban Growth Boundary and Growth Management Program.* The General Plan establishes a 20-year growth boundary, "trigger" caps on development, and adequate public facility requirements. These policies and programs will ensure phased and orderly development, and a sustained high quality of life.

2. *A “Greenbelt” around the city, with targeted growth areas.* Growth is targeted in selected areas to the east and northwest to reinforce a contiguous and compact urban form. Land surrounding the city, where Rohnert Park’s boundaries do not coincide with Cotati’s, are maintained in open space. An open space buffer is also maintained between new growth areas and Petaluma Hill Road. The buffer varies in width and includes both open land and recreational facilities.
3. *City/University Integration, and Mixed-Use Centers.* The General Plan designates a new pedestrian-oriented University District—envisioned with a mix of residential, retail, entertainment, and office uses that cater to students, faculty, and staff, as well as residents—along Rohnert Park Expressway north of the campus. In addition, the City Center, adjacent to the Expressway and Commerce Boulevard, is designated for a mix of public, office, residential, and retail uses. In addition to these two new centers, the Wilfred-Dowdell Village is already being planned as of 1999 and provides a variety of shops and commercial uses, in a pedestrian-oriented enclave on the westside.
4. *Balanced Neighborhoods.* A guiding premise of the Plan is that activities and facilities used on a frequent basis, such as stores and parks, should be easily accessible to residents. Land uses are designated to ensure balanced neighborhood development with a mix of uses and housing types, provision of parks and schools, and easy access to mixed-use and commercial activity centers.
5. *Increased Connectivity and Accessibility.* The city’s existing neighborhoods have few interconnecting streets, and US 101 limits east-west access. Improved connections between neighborhoods, as well as new connections across the highway are included in the General Plan. Roadway improvements and new streets are also proposed to link different neighborhoods and to connect residential areas with SSU.
6. *A Network of Open Space.* Using creeks as the armature, an interconnected network of open space, parks, and trails is provided. These will also enable connections from existing neighborhoods to open space areas beyond Petaluma Hill Road and the SSU campus.
7. *Pedestrian- and Bicycle-Friendly Environments.* Policies for land uses, mixes, intensities, and urban design are established to encourage walking and bicycling. In activity centers like the University District, policies are also established to promote small block sizes and frequent local streets, which help maximize the permeability of a neighborhood for people walking or bicycling.
8. *Enhanced Community Character.* The General Plan establishes specific urban design policies at a citywide, neighborhood, and street scale. Connections between neighborhoods, transitions between urban and open space areas, city and neighborhood edges, community orientation of development, building massing, and streetscapes are all addressed. Policies are also included for viewshed protection.